

STATE OF ARIZONA  
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JANET NAPOLITANO  
GOVERNOR  
[WWW.GOVERNOR.STATE.AZ.US](http://WWW.GOVERNOR.STATE.AZ.US)



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FOR MORE INFORMATION  
CONTACT:  
JEANINE L'ECUYER  
(602) 542-4331  
1-800-253-0883  
[jlecuyer@az.gov](mailto:jlecuyer@az.gov)

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## ***BLUE RIBBON PANEL HEARS TESTIMONY RE: IMPROVEMENTS AT LEWIS PRISON***

### ***Corrections Offers 106 Additional Recommendations***

PHOENIX - The Blue Ribbon Panel reviewing the January hostage incident at the Arizona State Prison - Lewis Complex today heard testimony outlining changes that have been implemented throughout the state's correctional system.

In March, the Panel released the results of its month-long review of the incident in which two inmates in a security tower at the Morey Unit held two correctional officers hostage. Both officers survived.

The Panel found severe deficiencies at the Morey Unit, as well as problems throughout the Lewis facility. In its report, the Panel made 69 recommendations for specific improvements necessary for the safe operation of Department of Corrections facilities.

Through strategic planning, as well as other review processes, the Department has identified 106 additional areas for improvement.

"We're going back to basics," said Corrections Director Dora Schriro. "We inherited a mess. Safety systems had been dropped, and in many cases, operations had become unacceptably sloppy. Our own management let our line staff down. We are reinstating training, systems and oversight procedures to protect the safety of the public and our officers."

Joe Masella, President of the Arizona Correctional Peace Officers Association added, "The Corrections system has been neglected by the state legislature for many years. It is unfortunate that it took a tragedy to open their eyes to the plight of correctional officers."

"The Governor and the Director have given a voice to Corrections employees," said Robert Blackmer, Chair of the corrections coalition of AFSCME. "Employee input to this process virtually guarantees positive change."

Ernie Trujillo, who was named Warden at the Lewis Prison shortly after the hostage incident, added that he has seen excellent compliance with the new initiatives.

Copies of the response documents are available. Please contact Jeanine L'Ecuyer at (602) 542-4331.

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